



THE
LAST ILLNESS AND DEATH
OF
GEORGE HARDY,
A COLOURED BOY.

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.—Acts, x. 34, 35.

DURING the winter of 1832, the writer of the narrative of which this account is an abridgment, became acquainted with Hannah Hardy, an interesting old coloured woman, and her son George. They were the suffering tenants of a miserable garret, lighted only by a few panes of glass, and ill-secured from the inclemencies of the weather.

Hannah had been an industrious woman, who supported herself comfortably for many years, until her sight, which had long been declining, so nearly left her, as to disqualify her for all kinds of work. George, who was her youngest son, disclosed in his earliest years great quickness of discernment and readiness of apprehension. He could read the Bible when only four years old, and continued to be remarkable for docility, and for preferring his books and other profitable employments to the idle sports of children.

When about eleven years old, he was placed from home, where he remained until four years since, when he became so much diseased with scrofula as to make it necessary to return to his mother. From that time she became his constant and only nurse, and evinced, through numberless privations and difficulties, the most unwearied attention and patient endurance.

He assisted her in dressing his sores which had attained such a height as to prevent his walking without the assistance of crutches. When he was able to sit up and to use his arms, he

made rope mats ; by which, with casual help from his friends he supported his mother and paid her rent. He used always to mend his own and her clothes, and allowed no time to pass idly away, which he was able to employ ; and so cheerful, so thankful, and so happy did this interesting couple appear, that it afforded a lesson of instruction to be with them.

Hannah, who could only distinguish the glare of noon from the gloom of darkness, had lived so long in the forlorn tenement they then inhabited, and knew so well all the turnings of its steep and dangerous stairs, that she could not bear to hear the proposal from some of her friends to provide one more comfortable. Through the latter part of winter, and the commencement of the spring, George's sufferings greatly increased ; he was confined wholly to his bed, and so emaciated was he with pain and disease, that although seventeen years of age, his arms were not thicker than an infant's.

He had been a diligent reader of the Holy Scriptures, and though he told me they had been to him a sealed book until he was brought to that bed of suffering, yet it was evident his mind had long been enabled to appropriate to its own necessities many of their precious precepts. Though he laboured under the combined effects of scrofula and dropsy, in their highest degrees of virulence, yet I never heard him repine, and often while suffering extreme bodily anguish, he would speak of the relief it afforded the poor afflicted body, to have the mind composed and tranquil, and would say, "Oh, I feel like a poor worm in the fire, yet all I desire is, to be favoured with patience to bear all my pain, and with a willing mind to wait the Master's will to take me away."

For many days and nights together he was able to obtain but little sleep. Yet he showed no marks of restlessness or discontent. Once calling me to his bed-side, he said, "I am afraid I am not patient enough, but I often feel very weary, and fear I shall wear my poor mother out. I am more concerned for her than for myself—what should I do for a care-taker, if she were gone? She is very kind to me, and I have many kind friends. I am afraid I am not grateful enough for all my favours. To some, this garret would look like a dull place, but it never looks gloomy to me ; I have had more pleasure in it than I could have had in the nicest parlour."

Having called one day after he had passed a sleepless and languishing night, I found him, with the Bible fixed before him, reading. He looked animated, and said, "I always loved to read the Bible, but I never understood it until very lately : now I understand it, and I find that religion and pleasure are in no

way inconsistent. I feel now that I shall never recover ; I am willing to die, and shall be happy when I am gone from earth—but the Lord is very merciful, and can make me happy so long as he chooses me to stay. I have trusted in him through pain and through want, and believe he will never forsake me. My faith has sometimes been closely tried, but I never let go my confidence.”

His disease now rapidly increased, and with it his suffering. On the 23d of Fifth-month, he conversed a long time with the doctor, and seemed more comfortable than usual ; but passed a sleepless and distressing night. The next day he was able to take but little nourishment, owing to the great soreness of his mouth and throat, but he could converse intelligibly and seemed anxious to do so. About two o'clock this day, I found him in great pain, but quite tranquil in mind. On my going to him, he said, “my sufferings are now nearly over ; I shall not live many days—not more than two—the Lord’s time has nearly come, and then he will take me where I shall never suffer any more—Oh, how marvellous his mercy is, to look down upon such a polluted sinner as I am—

“I the worst of sinners am,
But Jesus came to save me—

Yes, he will save me—I know it ! I have a hope—a pretty certain hope—Oh, it is a very certain hope ; it is a very sure hope.” He then, in a low and indistinct voice, supplicated for many minutes ; after which he said, “I have been talking to my Saviour.” Not expecting him to hear, I asked his mother if he had always been a serious boy ; but before she could reply, George said, “No ! I was always bad, always wicked ; but since I was brought to this bed of sickness, I have sought for repentance and I have found it : my sins were as scarlet, but now they are washed as white as snow : but it is all mercy, pure mercy—We have no righteousness of our own to depend upon : no works, no merit of our own will avail us at such a time as this. If these were all we had to look to, we should never be saved. But this is what Jesus came into the world for ; to save us poor sinners, and salvation belongs to him alone.”

After this, he desired me to read to him in the Bible—said he would like me to read in the Psalms, where David deplored his sins. I did so, and he afterwards composed himself and slept a few minutes ; but the pain soon awoke him, and he said, “I hope my patience will hold out—I must not get impatient so near the end.”

On the 25th, his sufferings greatly increased, and on the afternoon of the 26th, he was unable longer to speak, but appeared sensible of what was passing, and to know those about him. He several times embraced his mother very tenderly, and wept.

The impress which the pain and anguish of the preceding day had left upon his countenance, now yielded to a placid and heavenly serenity; and his breath continued to shorten, until he ceased to breathe, about 12 o'clock on First-day morning.

Philadelphia, 5th Mo. 27th, 1832.

TEMPTATION RESISTED, AND HONESTY REWARDED.

A poor chimney-sweeper's boy was employed at the house of a lady of rank, to sweep the chimney of the room in which she usually dressed. When finding himself on the hearth of a richly furnished dressing-room, and perceiving no one there, he waited a few moments to take a view of the beautiful things in the apartment. A gold watch, richly set with diamonds, particularly caught his attention, and he could not forbear taking it in his hand. Immediately the wish arose in his mind, "Ah! if thou hadst such a one!" After a pause, he said to himself, "But if I take it I shall be a thief; and yet," continued he, "nobody would know it; nobody sees me—nobody! does not God see me who is present everywhere?" Overcome by these thoughts, a cold shivering seized him; "No!" said he, putting down the watch, "I had much rather be poor, and keep my good conscience, than rich, and become a rascal." At these words, he hastened back into the chimney. The lady, who was in the room adjoining, having overheard the conversation with himself, sent for him the next morning, and thus accosted him:—"My little friend, why did you not take the watch yesterday?" The boy fell on his knees, speechless and astonished. "I heard every thing you said;" continued her ladyship—"thank God for enabling you to resist this temptation, and be watchful over yourself for the future: from this moment you shall be in my service: I will both maintain and clothe you; nay, more, I will procure you good instruction, which will assist to guard you from the danger of similar temptations." The boy burst into tears; he was anxious to express his gratitude, but could not. The lady strictly kept her promise, and had the pleasure of seeing this poor chimney-sweeper grow up a good, pious, and intelligent man.